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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SSM-03 IO-13 /084 W
----------181347Z 078998 /43
R 181015Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3074
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCAS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USUN NEW YORK 682
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OSLO 0260

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, NO, IS
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT ADMONISHES ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FOR CRITICISM OF NORWEGIAN PARLAMENTARIAN

REF: 76 OSLO 3309

1. SUMMARY: THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT PLANS TO TAKE NO ADDITIONAL ACTION TOWARD ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR HERE FOR HIS SHARP CRITICISM LAST WEEK OF NORWAY'S PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOR REMARKS THE LATTER MADE IN JORDAN RECENTLY. THE MABASSADOR'S CRITICISM CREATED A FLARE-UP IN THE NORWEGIAN PRESS, AND ON JAN 14 THE NORWEGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ADMONISHED THE AMBASSADOR FOR HIS REMARKS. THE AMBASSADOR HAS SINCE APOLOGIZED. THE INCIDENT PROBABLY WILL HAVE NO IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON NORWEGIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS, THOUGH
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IT WILL NOT HELP THE AMBASSADOR'S POSITION HERE AND IT PROBABLY WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE GRADUAL MODERATION OF NORWEGIAN SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JAN 12 ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO NORWAY, DAVID Z. RIVLIN, CRITICIZED THE CHAIRMAN OF NORWAY'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IN A PRESS CONFERENCE IN OSLO. RIVLIN

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CALLED IN THE PRESS TO COMMENT ON THE RELEASE OF PLO TERRORIST ABOU DAOUD. BUT HE TOOK THE OCCASION TO LASH OUT AT CHAIRMAN TOR OFTEDAL, WHO WAS AT THAT TIME LEADING THE STORTING FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON AN INFORMATION GATHERING VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST. OFTEDAL REPORTEDLY HAD SAID TO PALESTINE REFUGEES IN A REFUGEE CAMP NEAR AMMAN ON JAN 5 THAT "NO NATION WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT SUCH HUMILIATING CONDITIONS AS THOSE YOU LIVE UNDER."

3. RIVLIN TOLD THE NORWEGIAN PRESS THAT OFTEDAL'S REMARKS COULD BE EXPLOITED BY PRO-PALESTINE AND ANTI-ISRAELI FORCES. THE MABASSADOR ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT OFTEDAL HAD BEEN TAKEN IN BY THE PALESTINIANS AND ARABS AND THAT THE NORWEGIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN HAD PALESTINIAN AND ARAB SYMPATHIES. RIVLIN WENT ON TO ACCUSE NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES OF SEEKING TO AVOID ISRAELI EFFORTS TO ASSIST THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE DURING ITS VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST. THE COMMITTEE WAS ON A TWO-WEEK VISIT TO EGYPT, SYRIA, JORDAN AND ISRAEL, TOURING LOCATIONS AND HOLDING DISCUSSIONS WITH PRINCIPAL LEADERS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S CHARGES THE MFA PRESS SPOKESMAN STATED JAN 14 THAT FOREIGN ENVOYS IN NORWAY SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION IN CRITICIZING NORWEGIAN POLI-TICIANS BY NAME, AND THAT IT WAS NOT RIGHT FOR ISRAEL'S OSLO AMBASSADOR TO MAKE THE STATEMENT HE MADE TO THE PRESS IN OSLO ABOUT THE STORTING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN.

5. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES INFORMED US JAN 14 THAT MFA
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PLANS TO TAKE NO ADDITIONAL ACTION TOWARD RIVLIN FOR HIS CRITICISM OF OFTEDAL. THE SOURCE SAID THE MFA LOOKS UPON THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT AS A "TEMPERMENTAL OUTBURST." IT DOES NOT WANT THE INCIDENT TO AFFECT RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, AND IT HOPES THE INCIDENT WILL NOW BLOW OVER AND BE FORGOTTEN. THE SOURCE SAID RIVLIN'S CRITICISM OF NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES RELATED TO FACT THAT NORWAY'S EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV DECLINED AN ISRAELI OFFER TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER ASSIST-ANCE TO THE COMMITTEE ON GROUNDS THAT THE COMMITTEE WAS VISITING AT ITS OWN REQUEST AND NOT AT INVITATION OF ISRAELI GOVERNMENT AND, THEREFORE, PREFERRED TO HAVE EMBASSY RATHER THAN ISRAELIS PROVIDE SERVICES.

6. MEANWHILE THE STORTING COMMITTEE LEARNED OF RIVLIN'S COMMENTS WHILE IT WAS VISITING JERUSALEM. NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR ODD JACOBSEN RAISED THE ISSUE ON HIS OWN WITH OFFICIALS OF THE ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY, EXPRESSING HIS AND THE COMMITTEE'S CONCERN. THE MINISTRY PROFESSED SURPRISE AT RIVLIN'S REMARKS.

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7. LATER, ON JAN 14, AMBASSADOR RIVLIN APOLOGIZED TO AN MFA OFFICER FOR HIS STATEMEPO, INDICATING IT WAS DONE AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE, AND HE TOLD THE PRESS HE WAS SORRY OFTEDAL HAD TAKEN HIS COMMENTS PERSONALLY. HE SAID HE WOULD APPOLOGIZE TO OFTELDAL.

8. OFTEDAL SAID LATER HE REGRETTED THE INCIDENT HAD TAKEN UP SO MUCH OF THE COMMITTEE'S TIME DURING ITS BRIEF STAY IN ISRAEL. HE SAID THE VISIT WAS EXTREMELY VALUABLE. THE COMMITTEE HELD OPEN AND DIRECT TALKS WITH TOP LEADERS OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES VISITED, AND OFTEDAL SAID HE HAD GAINED THE VIEW THAT LEADERS IN ALL THESE COUNTRIES WANTED TO ACHIEVE PEACE AND THAT POSSIBILITIES FOR SOLVING THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT WERE BETTER NOW THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN 30 YEARS.

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9. COMMENT: THE AMBASSODOR'S APOLOGY WILL, WE BELIEVE, END THE LIVELY PRESS COVERAGE OF THE INCIDENT IN NORWAY. MFA OFFICIALS CLEARLY WANT TO PUT THE ISSUE BEHIND THEM, AND RIVLIN'S BLAST AT OFTEDAL IS NOT LIKELY TO HAVE ANY IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON THE GON'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL. OSLO HAS HAD OTHER OUTSPOKEN ISRAELI AMBASSADORS BEFORE AND AS THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST DAILY,(AFTENPOSTEN", (CONSERVATIVE), SAID IN EDITORALIZING ON THE PRESENT INCIDENT: "PEOPLE SURROUNDED BY MILLION OF ENEMIES ALWAYS ARE ON THE ALERT AND ALWAYS SUSPICIOUS."

10. NEVERTHELESS THE INCIDENT CANNOT HELP BUT PUT THE ISRAELIS AND ESPECIALLY THEIR AMBASSADOR IN A LESS FABOR-ABLE LIGHT PUBLICLY HERE. OFTEDAL IS HIGHLY RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING LABOR PARTY, AND DIRECT PERSONAL ATTACKS ARE CONSIDERED BAD POLITICAL FORM IN NORWAY, ESPECIALLY BY AN OUTSIDER.

1. THE INCIDENT CAN AS WELL CONTRIBUTE TO WHAT CLEARLY APPEARS TO BE A MORE MODERATE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST SISUATION HERE AND A SOFTENING IN THE STRONG EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AMONG NORWEGIANS. NORWAY'S SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS HAS OVERALL REMAINED FIRM. BUT A BROADER UNDERSTANDING IN NORWAY OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, THE EMERGENCY OF MORE MODERATE ARAB POSITIONS, SOME IDENTIFICATION OF NORWEGIANS WITH OTHER OIL STATES INTERESTS, AND CONCERN FOR LDC OPINION HAVE ALL DIMINISHED THE INTENSITY OF SUPPORT FROM ANY PUBLIC APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF THE ISRAELI ENTEBBE OPERATION (OSLO 3309). LOCAL ISRAELI ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THE 1973 MISTAKEN MURDER BY ISRAELI CITIZENS OF A MORROCAN LIVING IN NORWAY AND THE CURRENT EXCHANGE WITH FIVLIN NO DOUBT HAVE ADDED A MORE SOBER SIDE TO THE NORWEGIAN VIEW OF THE ISRAELI CASE. WE MAY GET ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO THE EVOLVING LOCAL ATTITUDE IN SEVERAL WEEKS WHEN THE MEMBERS OF STORTING FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PRESENT
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THEIR VIEWS IN THE PARLIAMENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATE.
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